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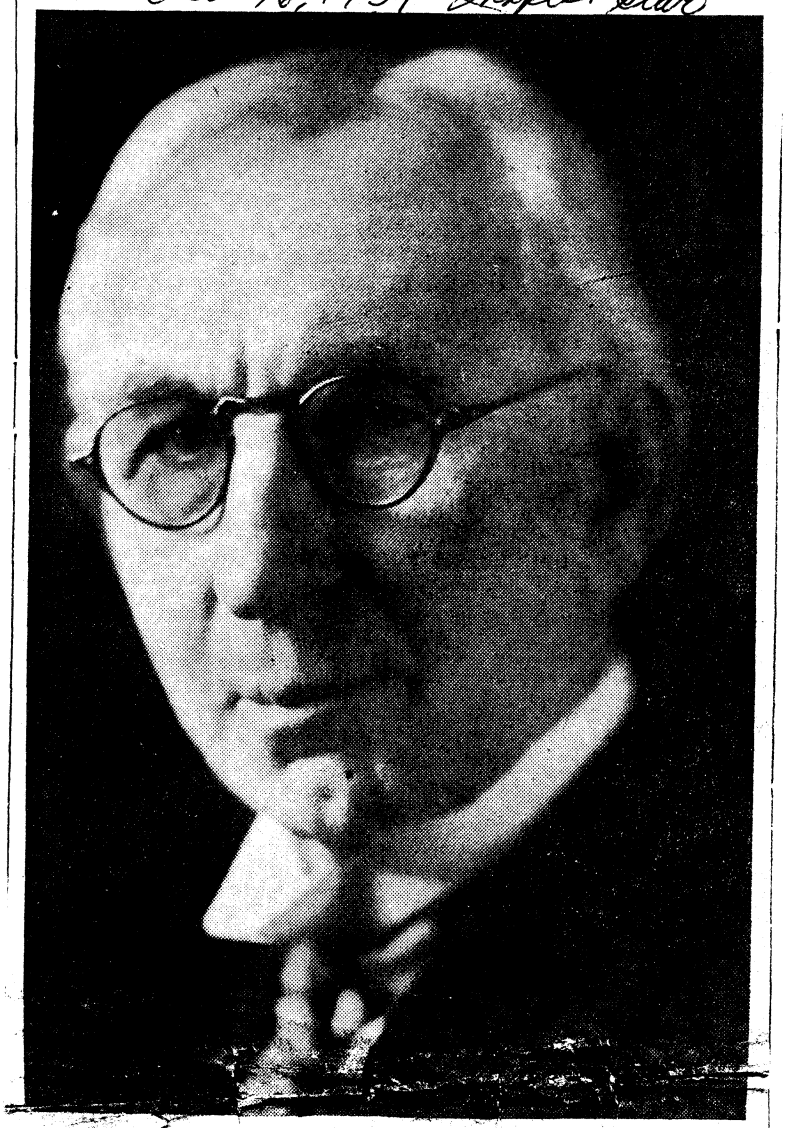
Coffin Family

CHARLES E. COFFIN, CIVIC LEADER, DIES

Oct 16, 1934 Indpls. Star



CHARLES E. COFFIN.

Treasurer of The Star Was Prominent in Business Half Century—Helped Develop Park and Boulevard Systems as Member of City Board 23 Years.

Charles E. Coffin, 85 years old, treasurer of The Star Publishing Company and a civic and business leader in Indianapolis nearly half a century, died early yesterday morning in his home, 1213 North Meridian street.

Despite his many activities, Mr. Coffin found much time to devote to the city and was instrumental in development of the Indianapolis park and boulevard systems and the chain of municipal golf courses which are considered among the finest in the nation.

Health Impaired 2 Years Ago.

He suffered impaired health two years ago and his condition became serious after he was stricken with a heart attack while in St. Petersburg, Fla., in March. Death was due to a second heart attack suffered Sunday.

Funeral services will be conducted by the Rev. Abram S. Woodard, pastor of the Meridian Street M. E. Church, assisted by Dr. Jean S. Milner, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon in the Flanner & Buchanan Mortuary. Burial will be in Crown Hill cemetery.

Pallbearers will be Benjamin F. Lawrence, general manager of The Star Publishing Company; James A. Stuart, managing editor of The Star; John C. Shaffer, president of The Star Publishing Company, James W. Noel, William H. Coleman, James M. Ogden and J. S. Holliday.

Mr. Coffin had been a resident of Indianapolis sixty-five years. He had served as a member of the Indianapolis Board of Park Commissioners under five mayors and eight city administrations.

He played an important part in the development of the city's park and boulevard system, much of the work having been accomplished during the period while he served as a member of the park board. It was in recognition of his services that the Coffin golf course, classed as one of the finest public links in the country, was given his name when it was acquired by the city.

Mr. Coffin was born at Salem, July 13, 1849, the son of Zachariah T. and Caroline Armfield Coffin. The father was a farmer and a justice of the peace, and Mr. Coffin's early life was spent largely on the farm.

Moved to Bloomington.

The family went from Salem to Bloomington in 1862 and the parents died there. Mr. Coffin attended the public schools in both Salem and Bloomington.

When he was 20 years old, Mr. Coffin came to Indianapolis. Here he entered the employ of Wylie & Martin, real estate dealers, and he remained with the firm about six years before entering the same business in his own behalf. During his career in the real estate business, which continued many years, he dealt in both business and residential property and was instrumental in promotion of numerous subdivisions.

Central Trust Founder.

In 1899, with other business men, he was instrumental in forming the Central Trust Company. He became president of the institution and continued in that capacity until it was merged with the Farmers Trust Company. Following the merger, he was chairman of the board of the latter organization for some time.

Mr. Coffin was one of the original stockholders of the Indianapolis & Eastern Railroad Company.

In 1911, Mr. Coffin became secretary-treasurer of The Star Publishing Company, which now publishes The Indianapolis Star and The Muncie Star, and he served as a member of the board of directors since that date.

Served Under Taggart.

His public service began in 1899 when Thomas Taggart was mayor of Indianapolis, and he served continuously as a member of the park board twenty-three years. It was during the Taggart administration that 1,000 acres of what now is known as Taggart Riverside park was purchased, and 100 acres of Brookside park was acquired during the administration. The purchases, together with some other tracts of land, cost the city about $300,000. The acreage now is estimated as being worth many millions.

Mr. Coffin also was a member of the board when Fall Creek and Pleasant Run boulevards were constructed during the first administration of Charles A. Bookwalter, and during the administration of John W. Holtzman, when Willard park was purchased.

Sponsored Boulevard System.

It was during the second Bookwalter administration that George E. Kessler of Kansas City, Mo., a landscape engineer, was engaged to plan the present Indianapolis boulevard system, which is reputed to be one of the most beautiful systems of its type in the United States. A considerable portion of this work was done during the first administration of Samuel Lewis Shank. He also was a member of the board when much of the flood prevention work was accomplished.

After the retirement of Charles W. Jewett from the mayor's office, Mr. Shank was inaugurated for his second term and Mr. Coffin became president of the Board of Public Works and served in that capacity until the close of the Shank administration, when he retired from public life.

Tribute was paid to him by persons high in national and municipal circles when he was guest of honor at a dinner in the Columbia Club, Dec. 31, 1925, an event marking completion of his twenty-fifth year as a member of municipal boards.

Among those who paid tribute were the late Mr. Taggart, the late Mr. Bookwalter, Mr. Jewett, the late Mr. Shank, Harry S. New, former United States senator and postmaster general; James E. Watson, former United States senator; Will G. Irwin of Columbus, financier; Mr. Ogden, former attorney general and city corporation counsel; Frank C. Ball, Muncie manufacturer and philanthropist; the late Joseph A. McGowan, executive of the old Indianapolis Street Railways Company, and Mr. Holtzman.

Mr. Coffin became president of the Indiana Savings and Investment Company, a $3,000,000 corporation, in 1889 and held the office until he died.

Authority on Bridge.

He was an authority on the game of whist and bridge-whist and he wrote several books on the subject. He played at several congresses of the American Whist League and was elected president of the congress in 1923.

Mr. Coffin was first married to Elizabeth Holloway of Bloomington, Ill., in 1875. She died in 1893.

On Sept. 20, 1897, he was married to Mary Birch Fletcher, who died last year.

Survivors are three children, Clarence E. Coffin of Indianapolis, Mrs. J. H. Ingram, wife of Capt. Ingram of the United States Navy, stationed at Washington, and Mrs. Charles Harvey Bradley of Indianapolis.

There also are seven grandchildren, Charles E. Coffin Jr., lieutenant on the U. S. S. Guam on patrol duty in the Yangtze river, China; Tristram Coffin of the editorial staff of the Indianapolis Times; Miss Caroline Coffin, Charles Harvey Bradley Jr., and Barbara Bradley, all of Indianapolis, and William Ingram, midshipman at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, and Miss Mary Birch Ingram of Washington, a student at Connecticut College, New London, Conn.

Mr. Coffin was a member of the Indiana Historical Society, the Meridian Street M. E. Church, Woodstock Club, Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, Contemporary Club, Columbia Club, Indianapolis Board of Trade, Indiana Society of Chicago, Country Club of Indianapolis, Indianapolis Art Association, the Society of Indiana Pioneers and the Optimist Club.

He also was a thirty-second degree Mason, a member of Murat Temple and Raper Commandery, No. 1, Knights Templar, and formerly was a member of the Indianapolis Athletic Club and the University Club.

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LEADER DIES

Charles E. Coffin, widely-known Indianapolis business man and civic leader, died early Monday at his home, 1213 North Meridian street, following a heart attack. He was eighty-five years old.

CHARLES E. COFFIN, CIVIC LEADER, DIES

Former Park Board Member Had Many and Varied Interests—Ill Two Years.

Oct. 15, 1934 Indpls News

Charles E. Coffin, age eighty-five, whose diversified activities and interests in Indianapolis brought him recognition over a period of several decades, died early Monday at his home, 1213 North Meridian street.

Mr. Coffin had been ill for about two years, and last March suffered a heart attack while at St. Petersburg, Fla., that left him in a precarious condition. A second attack Sunday was directly responsible for his death.

He was secretary-treasurer of the Star Publishing Company, publishers of the Indianapolis Star, and also was a director in the Polk Sanitary Milk Company. He organized the Central Trust Company and later financed construction of the Indianapolis & Eastern Traction Company, serving as vice-president until it was sold to the Terre Haute, Indianapolis & Eastern Traction Company.

With Park Board.

For nearly a quarter century Mr. Coffin was a member of the Indianapolis board of park commissioners. When the city acquired the old Highland golf course at the expiration of a lease, the course was named for him. It is one of the best municipal courses in the country

Mr. Coffin was born in Salem, the son of Zachariah and Caroline Coffin, and was a direct descendant of Tristram Coffin, one of the founders of Nantucket, Mass. Because of this heritage, Mr. Coffin was unusually interested in historical societies. He was a member of the Society of Colonial Wars, the Society of Indiana Pioneers and the Indiana Historical Society.

In 1870 Mr. Coffin entered the real estate business in Indianapolis and gradually extended his business and civic interests.

Wrote Book on Whist.

Among his principal avocations were whist and bridge. In 1895 he wrote a book entitled "The Gist of Whist," and followed this in 1907 with one on "The Gist of Auction Bridge." He was a former president of the American Whist League.

Mr. Coffin was a thirty-second degree Mason, a Shriner, a Republican and a member of the board of trustees of the Meridian Street M. E. church. He was a member of the Columbia, University, Woodstock and Optimist clubs, the Indiana Art Association, the James Whitcomb Riley Association and the Board of Trade.

Survivors include a son, Clarence E. Coffin, and two daughters, Mrs. J. H. Ingram and Mrs. Charles H. Bradley, Jr.

Funeral services will be held Wednesday at 2 p. m. at the Flanner & Buchanan mortuary, followed by burial in Crown Hill cemetery.

Other civic duties performed by Mr. Coffin included several years as president of the board of public works and at one time he was vice-consul in Paraguay.

Son Objects to Will.

Within a short time after the death was announced his son filed an objection to the probating of his will in probate court. The petitioner said he had reason to believe the greater part of an estate estimated at $500,000 had been left to Mrs. Ingram.

The will had not yet been filed for probate. The son charged that his father was of unsound mind when the will was made.

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CHARLES E. COFFIN.

KINDNESS and consideration for others were ever present in Charles E. Coffin's attitude towards those with whom he came into contact. It was characteristic of him to want to be of service, and he was of great service, to his friends and associates and to his community in his many-sided activities. Nothing seemed to please him more than to grant a favor or to perform some thoughtful act, often for those who had least reason to expect attention from him.

Mr. Coffin, despite his eighty-five years, was alert and interested in the every-day events of life until he was stricken a few weeks ago. He had been born in Indiana, came to Indianapolis when a very young man to enter business, in which he was successful. Mr. Coffin was a public-spirited citizen in all that term implies. He did more than approve and lend his indorsement to the advancement of the welfare of Indianapolis. He worked for it conscientiously and diligently.

The Charles E. Coffin golf course was named after him in recognition of nearly a quarter of a century of time and effort he gave to the city park board. He had vision and enthusiasm in helping to plan the park system of the city and to acquire much of the ground that has been improved either under his assistance or since. To Mr. Coffin a helping hand in planning for the future of Indianapolis was a labor of love to which he devoted himself whole-heartedly.

He served the city as a member of its Board of Works and made a fine record for painstaking and good judgment. Mr. Coffin had the respect and confidence of his fellow citizens in whatever capacity he served them. They knew him to be actuated by the highest of motives, a man whose integrity was unquestioned, whose word was as good as his bond. He had been an active factor in many business institutions of the city, and at his death was, as he had been many years, secretary-treasurer of The Star Publishing Company, publisher of The Indianapolis Star and The Muncie Star.

Mr. Coffin was a member of the Society of Colonial Wars and took an active interest in the Society of Indiana Pioneers and the Indiana Historical Society. He was an authority on whist and had been president of the American Whist League. His handbooks, "The Gist of Whist" and "The Gist of Auction Bridge," are nationally recognized. He belonged to many clubs and fraternal organizations, by whose membership he will be mourned.

He will be missed by none more than by those on The Star, to whom he never failed to wave a friendly greeting when he met them or an equally friendly good night when he left for home. Mr. Coffin was orthodox, but tolerant, in his religious views and broad-minded in his political opinions and his estimates of the problems of the times, in which he took the keenest of interest and delighted to discuss. His going will leave a sense of real and personal loss to those on the staff with whom he had been associated daily during many years.

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Oct 16 1934

CHARLES E. COFFIN

Charles E. Coffin, who died Monday at the age of eighty-five years, will be missed in a wide field of activities. He was secretary-treasurer of the company publishing the Indianapolis Star; member of historical and pioneer societies; trustee of the Meridian Street M. E. church; member of several social, political and luncheon clubs; publisher of authoritative books on whist and bridge, and director in numerous established business corporations. In the way of public office, Mr. Coffin for many years, under several administrations, served as park commissioner. In recognition of this service, the old Highland golf course was renamed the Coffin course, now known to all golf players. Aside from these public and official relations, Mr. Coffin was known for his genial and friendly attitude toward all public enterprises, and for his helpful and encouraging support, particularly where young men were deserving of recognition. He was friendly and cheerful and was approached with confidence by any who sought counsel in a good cause. In a long last illness, he maintained a courageous outlook, and was ever a disciple of optimism and good cheer.

SON OPENS WILL TEST.

Steps to block probating of the will of Charles E. Coffin were taken in Probate Court yesterday by his son, Clarence E. Coffin. In a petition to enjoin the probating of the document, the son sought to show that the signature of Mr. Coffin to the will was obtained under duress and under "undue influence exercised by Jean Fletcher Ingram and others." Mrs. Ingram is the daughter by a former marriage of Mr. Coffin's second wife.

The estate, according to the suit, is in excess of $500,000.

The only heirs at law are the son and a daughter, Mrs. Carolyn Bradley, the complaint declared.

June 16 1934

CHARLES E. COFFIN

THE death of Charles E. Coffin, secretary-treasurer of The Indianapolis Star and active civic leader of Indianapolis, brings to an end the career of a man who daily served the interests of his community.

Mr. Coffin was one of the outstanding believers in community welfare, one of his chief goals in life being the establishment of parks for every one. He instituted the municipal golf course system here, which has grown into one of the finest of its kind in the nation. Coffin golf course is named after him.

At 85, Mr. Coffin still was active in daily business and community work.

His history of starting life as a Salem (Ind.) farmer boy and winning his way to the top of the ladder was typical of Mr. Coffin's ability to move forward with the best interests of his city and state at heart.

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Coffin Family

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WORK IN BUILDING FINER CITY LAUDED IN COFFIN TRIBUTE

Tribute to the abilities of Charles E. Coffin in business and financial affairs and to his many years of service in civic and other enterprises was paid yesterday by men associated with him and who knew the value of his counsel.

JOHN C. SHAFFER, Editor and Publisher, The Indianapolis Star—Some men are esteemed great because they have acquired a fortune in gold and silver. Other men have been regarded as great because they have been honored by their constituents with political position. Real greatness does not consist in the abundance of riches nor political position, but in character. My friend, Charles Coffin, was a great man, a great soul, for he had lived such a life that all who knew him recognized his noble character. He was always true to the highest ethical thought and action.

B. F. LAWRENCE, general manager of The Star—In the death of Charles E. Coffin, its secretary-treasurer, The Indianapolis Star organization has lost a wise and kindly counselor. He came to the paper ripe in experience as a banker, real estate and insurance man. This, together with his knowledge of Indianapolis as a city and the activities of its citizens over a long period of years, made his advice most valuable, a real contribution to the development of The Star.

Save recently when his illness became acute, he was at his desk regularly for twenty-five years, giving cheer to all with whom he came in contact. It was not only members of The Star who called on Mr. Coffin for advice. All his friends, and they were legion, felt free to consult him. None was turned away. It was a cardinal principle of his life to make some one happy each day, otherwise he was disappointed.

He served in many civic capacities, but it was the development of the Indianapolis park system he considered his most notable contribution to the development of the city. Mayor after mayor reappointed him, and it was with no little regret that he left the Park Board to become chairman of the Board of Public Works in Mayor Shank's second term. This work completed, he gave up all outside interests and concentrated his time and efforts on his work at The Star, greatly to the pleasure as well as benefit of his associates, in whose memory, it may be certain, he will live forever.

ARTHUR V. BROWN, president of the Indiana National Bank and the Union Trust Company—Charles E. Coffin was prominent in the real estate, financial and civic fields in Indianapolis for more than forty years. He was most active in every worthy cause which promoted the general good of his city. His activities included his church, his fraternal societies, and he also found time to write two books on whist and auction bridge which were considered authorities. Mr. Coffin made many friends and he will be greatly missed by all of his close associates and the city of Indianapolis, which he served so well for so many years.

CHARLES W. JEWETT, former mayor of Indianapolis under whom Mr. Coffin served as a member of the Board of Park Commissioners—Mr. Coffin was one of the city's outstand-

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ing citizens because of his interest in so many things. He found time for everything and gave unstintingly of his time. While serving on the Board of Park Commissioners he served with enthusiasm and the city profited by his splendid ideas which were instrumental in the development of our park, boulevard and golf links systems that have gained national recognition.

Mr. Coffin lived a long life of usefulness. He was a fine friend and a fine official.

MAYOR REGINALD H. SULLIVAN—It was with a feeling of deep sorrow that I learned of the death of Charles E. Coffin. Mr. Coffin, for many years, had been a very close friend of my father and, in more recent years, it had been my privilege to know him well. I had the highest regard and respect for him and feel that in his passing Indianapolis has lost a sterling citizen.

JACKIEL W. JOSEPH, president of the Board of Park Commissioners—Indianapolis today has one of the finest park systems in the country and it grew out of the early work of Charles E. Coffin and men like him. His vision and devotion to his community have brought happiness to many thousands of people. It is most fortunate that the Charles E. Coffin golf course was established as a permanent memorial to him while he still was alive and was able to enjoy the honor.

FRANK C. BALL, Muncie Manufacturer and Philanthropist — The death of Mr. Coffin is a great shock to me as I have known him for many years and consider him a very warm friend. I have met him many times as secretary-treasurer of The Star Publishing Company. He was a member of the State Normal school board with me for several years while Dr. Parsons was president of the two schools at Terre Haute and Muncie. He resigned his place on the board to accept an appointment to the Indianapolis Park Board. Mr. Coffin was interested in all good civic work and the state and his many friends will miss him very much.

MAYOR WOOD POSEY, Terre Haute — I have known Charles E. Coffin for many years and he was an admirable gentleman with all of the attributes that title connotes. Through our kindred interests in parks, I came to know him well over a rather long period. Not only Indianapolis, but the entire state has lost a valuable citizen, because his interest in park development spread its influence into every city in the state. My relationship with him was not in the sphere of the newspaper world, but I am quite sure that the passing of a man of his character is a distinct loss to the whole newspaper fraternity.

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